

Historic District Review Committee

Staff Report

Date of Meeting: November 14, 2011

CAPP2011-0017

Historic District: Goose Creek

Project Planner: Lauren Murphy

Action Item

CAPP 2011-0017 James Simon: Extension of Existing Deck. PIN #384-17-5765.

Background

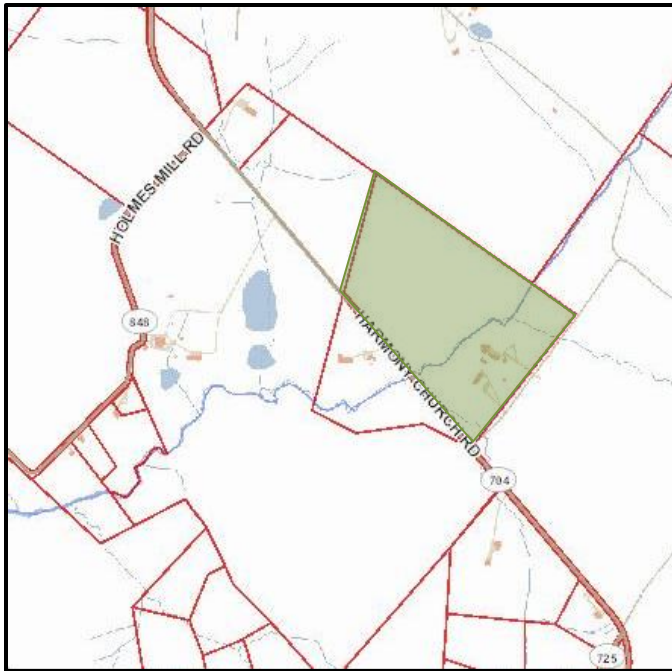


Figure 1: Subject property, 18548 Harmony Church Road

The subject property is located at 18548 Harmony Church Road in the Goose Creek Historic District. The subject parcel is approximately 27 acres. The existing house is surrounded by a grove of trees. The parcel is bisected by major flood plain and also has areas of steep slopes.

The subject property, known as “Little Brooke,” was added to the Goose Creek Historic District in 2005. The main block of the house was built in 1899 by Daniel and Cosmelia Janney Hughes. The house has had several subsequent additions. The most recent addition was constructed in the 1990s and included a 12 x 12 deck off the rear elevation. The main block of the house and its additions are clad in stucco and rest on a stone foundation.

The existing 12 x 12 deck is currently in the process of being replaced with in-kind materials. With this Certificate of Appropriateness, the applicant is seeking approval for a 12 x 24 extension of the existing deck.

Based on the zoning referral dated October 27, 2011, there are no zoning issues with this application.

Analysis

This application is evaluated under the Historic District Guidelines: Goose Creek (“Goose Creek Guidelines” or “Guidelines”), Chapter 4, *Guidelines for New Construction*, with references to Chapter 7, *Guidelines for Materials*, where appropriate.

In general, the Guidelines are not supportive of decks in the Historic Districts, especially on historic buildings, as there is no historic precedence for decks (*Goose Creek Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction, Decks, page 75, Inappropriate Treatment 1*). When decks are proposed, the Guidelines indicate that the deck should be:

- Sited where it is not visible from the front of the structure and so that the transition from house to deck to yard is as immediate as possible
- Integrated into the design and footprint of the house through the use of traditional porch design details
- Painted following the same color scheme as the house
- Screened with plantings from view of the public right-of-way

The proposed house is setback more than 250 feet from Harmony Church Road and is surrounded by a grove of trees. The proposed deck is located on the rear elevation, attached to a 1990s addition to the historic home, and will not be visible from Harmony Church Road. While an extension of the existing modest deck works against the intent of the Guidelines regarding decks in historic districts, and specifically decks on historic homes, it may be appropriate in this case given that a deck exists on the house, the reduced visibility of the proposed extension given the siting, and the proposed design details of the structure.



Photo 1: Subject property, rear, from Harmony Church Road

The Guidelines state that decks should incorporate traditional porch details as a means of relating the deck to the historic structure (*Goose Creek Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction, Decks, page 75, Guideline 3*). Design details to achieve this effect include the use of lattice to screen the open space under the deck, the use of a railing design that relates to other railings on the house, wrapping of deck piers with brick or stone, and the use of a roof to cover the deck and give it a porch appearance. The lower portion of the deck will be screened with boxed lattice mounted between the 6 x 6 pressure treated lumber support piers. The applicant has indicated that the lattice and support posts will be stained to match the rest of the deck. The use of lattice eliminates the appearance that the deck is supported by wooden stilts and also helps to visually incorporate the deck into the footprint of the house by making it appear more substantial which is consistent with the Guidelines. The limited height of the deck will work with the sloping topography of the property to facilitate a quick transition to the rear yard, as supported by the Guidelines (*Goose Creek Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction, Decks, page 75, Guideline 1*).

The deck railings will have simple pickets, spaced 4 inches apart. The railing will match the front porch railing, consistent with the Guidelines (*Goose Creek Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction, Decks, page 75, Guideline 3c*). The pickets will be 1 ¼ x 1 ¼ pressure treated lumber (PTL) pickets, stained to match the rest of the deck. The simple details of the deck are compatible with the house. The Guidelines suggest wrapping the support piers in brick or stone, similar to historic porches. However, in this case, the proposed deck addition is intended to match the existing modest deck and brick or stone piers may draw unwanted attention to the expanded deck area, already unobtrusive due to its siting and profile.



Photo 2: Subject property, rear elevation, existing deck

The proposed addition will connect to the existing deck but will be stepped down approximately 8 inches and will be double the length of the existing deck (24 feet rather than 12 feet). The proposed deck addition will match the existing deck in design but will make use of composite materials for the decking, top rails, and stair risers/treads. Pressure treated lumber (PTL) will be used for the support posts, pickets, and stair railings. The Guidelines are not supportive of exposed PTL especially in circumstances where the material will be visible from the public right-of-way (*Goose Creek Guidelines, Guidelines for New Construction, Decks, page 75, Inappropriate Treatment 2*). The proposed deck will not be visible from the road and the applicant has indicated that the deck will be stained. While the Guidelines specifically mention painting decks as a means of visually integrating with the house, a darker stain may achieve a similar goal and will also help the deck to blend into the grove of trees that surrounds the house, relating the structure to the landscape rather than the house itself.

Findings

1. The siting of the residence and the proposed extension of the existing deck is shielded from adjoining properties and the public right-of-way by the topography of the site and an existing grove of trees that surrounds the structure.
2. The Guidelines are not generally supportive of decks in the historic districts, especially when proposed for historic structures. The main block of the house was built circa 1899 and has had several major additions. The proposed deck will connect to an existing deck off an addition constructed in the 1990s.
3. The proposed deck transitions quickly to the rear yard and is anchored with boxed lattice giving the deck a more substantial appearance.

4. The simple railing design of the deck extension is consistent with the existing deck and the simple style of the main block. The picket style is consistent with the front porch and is consistent with the Guidelines.
5. The proposed deck addition will be constructed using pressure treated lumber and composite materials. The applicant has indicated that the pressure treated lumber will be stained which is consistent with the intent of the Guidelines. The use of composite wood-like material is also consistent with the Guidelines for materials and the Guidelines for decks.

Recommendation

Staff recommends approval of the application with the following condition to bring the application into conformance with the Guidelines:

1. That all exposed pressure treated lumber should be stained a dark, opaque stain. Composite wood products should have a finish to match.

Suggested Motions

1. *I move that the Historic District Review Committee approve Certificate of Appropriateness 2011-0017 for the construction of an addition to an existing deck at 18548 Harmony Church Road in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Goose Creek Historic and Cultural Conservation District based on the findings included on page 3 of the staff report dated November 14, 2011 with the following condition:*
 - a. That all exposed pressure treated lumber and composite materials should be stained a dark, opaque stain.
2. *I move that the Historic District Review Committee approve Certificate of Appropriateness 2011-0017 for the construction of an addition to an existing deck at 18548 Harmony Church Road in accordance with the Loudoun County Historic District Guidelines for the Goose Creek Historic and Cultural Conservation District based on the findings included on page 3 of the staff report dated November 14, 2011 as submitted.*
3. *Any alternative motion ...*